

FLOOD RE-ENTRY FACT SHEET

FEBRUARY 22, 2016

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality

Returning Home After a Hurricane or Flood



After a hurricane has passed an evacuated area, your local leaders and officials will determine when residents can return home. That decision will be based on many factors, including things like road conditions, public safety considerations, availability of electricity and clean drinking water.

Once local leaders clear the area for people to return home, there are many things you should consider when re-entering your community and during the clean-up process.

Items to Take When Returning Home:

- ☐ Government issued ID and proof of address
- ☐ Important phone numbers
- ☐ Bottled water and non-perishable foods
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Cleanser/hand cleaning gel for personal use
- ☐ Hygiene products and toilet paper
- ☐ Insect repellent and sun-screen
- ☐ Long sleeved shirts, long pants, sturdy waterproof boots and work gloves
- ☐ Flashlight, portable radio and extra batteries

Before Returning

- ✦ Find out if it is safe to enter your community or neighborhood. Follow the advice of your local authorities.
- ✦ Bring supplies such as flashlights, batteries, bottled water and non-perishable foods in case utilities are out.
- ✦ Create back-up communication plans with family and friends in case you are unable to call from affected areas.
- ✦ Plan for delays when traveling. Bring extra food, water, bedding, and other items that will make the trip more comfortable. Keep the fuel tank of your vehicle as full as possible in the case gas stations are crowded, out of fuel or closed.
- ✦ Carry a map to help you route around heavy traffic or impassable roads.
- ✦ Find out if local medical facilities are open and if emergency services are functioning again. Do NOT call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number to do this.
- ✦ Road beds may have been scoured or even washed away during flooding creating unsafe driving conditions, remain aware of road conditions.
- ✦ Fish kills are naturally occurring and not expected during a flood except in stagnant back water areas when the water is receding or when there is a change in salinity. Call DEQ at 1-888-763-5424 or 225-219-3640 to report fish kills.

First Inspection

- ✦ If possible, leave children and pets with a relative. If not, keep them away from hazards and floodwater.
- ✦ Beware of rodents, snakes, insects and other animals that may be on your property or in your home.
- ✦ Before entering your home, look outside for damaged power lines, gas lines, foundation cracks and other exterior damage. It may be too dangerous to enter the home.
- ✦ Smell for gas. Natural gas and other fuel lines may be broken, highly explosive vapors may still be present (methane and other explosives gases may accumulate from decaying materials). If you smell gas and other fuel or hear a hissing noise, leave immediately and contact the fire department.
- ✦ If your home was flooded, assume it is contaminated with mold. Mold increases health risks for those with asthma, allergies or other breathing conditions.
- ✦ Open doors and windows. Let the house air out before staying inside for any length of time or if the house was closed for more than 48 hours.
- ✦ Turn the main electrical power and water systems off until you or a professional can ensure that they are safe. NEVER turn the power on or off, or use an electrical tool or appliance while standing in water.
- ✦ Check the ceiling and floor for signs of sagging. Water may be trapped in the ceiling or floors may be unsafe to walk on.

Cleaning Your Home

- ✦ Wear sturdy clothing, including rubber gloves and rubber boots.
- ✦ Avoid broken glass and other sharp objects. Wear leather or sturdy gloves when handling outdoor objects.
- ✦ Be careful when moving furnishings or debris since they may be water logged and heavier.
- ✦ Throw out all food, beverages and medicine exposed to flood waters and mud, including canned goods and containers with food or liquid that have been sealed shut. When in doubt, throw it out.
- ✦ Some cleaning solutions can cause toxic fumes and other hazards if mixed together. If you smell a strong odor or your eyes water from the fumes or mixed chemicals, open a window and get out of your home.
- ✦ Don't remove unlabeled containers or containers that may contain hazardous material. Call DEQ at 1-888-763-5424 or 225-219-3640 to report environmental concerns.
- ✦ Throw out items that absorb water and cannot be cleaned or disinfected (e.g. mattresses, carpeting, cosmetics, stuffed animals and baby toys).
- ✦ Remove all drywall and insulation that has been in contact with flood waters.
- ✦ Clean hard surfaces (e.g. flooring, countertops and appliances) thoroughly with hot water and soap or a detergent.

Using Generators Safely

When using a portable generator, connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. Do not connect a portable generator to a home's electrical system. Operate the generator in the manner it was designed by the manufacturer.

If you are considering getting a generator, get advice from a professional, such as an electrician. Make sure that the generator you purchase is rated for the power that you think you will need.

Caution: Carbon Monoxide Kills ⚠

Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace, or any partially enclosed area. Locate unit away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.

The primary hazards to avoid when using alternate sources for electricity, heating or cooking are carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, electric shock and fire.

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Recommendations

Be sure that before using any electrical appliance, they are properly grounded, and where possible, connected to a ground break equipped electrical source, (GFI circuit).

Don't smoke, light matches, operate electrical switches, use either cell or conventional telephones, or create any other source of ignition.

Use fans both during and after the use of disinfecting, cleaning, and sanitizing products.

Do not overload circuits or extension cords causing an electrical fire.

Keep all household products locked, out of reach of children. Use child-resistant packaging properly by closing the container securely after each use. Keep items in original containers. Call 1-(800) 222-1222 (Louisiana Poison Control Center, LA only) immediately in case of poisoning.

Have a safety device readily available for emergencies such as an A-B-C fire extinguisher.

Floodwaters could contain high levels of bacteria. Don't drink or play in the floodwater.

Be sure all cuts, scrapes or wounds are covered so to further reduce the chances of becoming infected by floodwater.



Recommendations if Property is Contaminated With Oil Residues

Avoid bare skin contact with visible oil contamination.

Avoid areas on your property where the sediment/soil has visible oil contamination.

Avoid areas where petroleum odors are present.

Do not allow pets to come into contact with oil contamination.

If the presence of oil contamination has been verified, homes should not be re-occupied until the potential health hazards have been assessed and remediated, where it is deemed to be necessary.

Concerned citizens can call Single Point of Contact (SPOC) at 225-219-3640 to report oil or other pollution for assessment.



Procedures to Follow When Accumulating and Disposing of Debris and Waste

Segregate all wastes generated into 5 categories

- All other solid, nonhazardous wastes/debris (building materials, furniture, etc.)
- Electronic appliances (computers, laptops, televisions, stereos, etc.)
- Household chemicals, paint, herbicides, pesticides, caustic and flammable liquids (keep these items separated and in their original containers)
- Vegetative yard waste (tree limbs, leaves, etc.)
- White goods (refrigerators, washers, dryers, stoves and similar appliances)

When placing these wastes at curbside for pickup, keep each group separated from the other

For more information, refer to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality Comprehensive Plan for Disaster Clean-up and Debris Management:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/2853/Default.aspx>

Contacts:

American Red Cross Hurricane Preparedness: <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/hurricane>

EPA, Natural Disasters/Hurricanes: <http://www.epa.gov/naturalevents/hurricanes/index.html>

FEMA, Ready Campaign/Louisiana (Hurricane/Flood information): <http://www.ready.gov/louisiana>

Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness/Get a Game Plan: <http://www.getagameplan.org/index.htm>

Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness/State EOC: <http://gohsep.la.gov/RESPOND/STATE-EOC#>

Louisiana Department of Transportation/Road Reports and Weather Warnings: <http://hb.511la.org/#roadReports/layers=allReports,roadReports,weatherWarnings,ferryReports>

Louisiana State Police/Road Closures: <http://www.lsp.org/roadclosure.html>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/NEWS/HurricanePreparedness.aspx>

